

Somerville Climate Forward
Consumption and Waste Working Group Meeting #3
June 5, 2018

Attendance

- Cole Rosengren
- Vithal Deshpande, City of Somerville
- Melissa Eusden
- Victoria Gasidlo
- Laura Olivier
- Hannah Payne, City of Somerville

Feedback on Consumption Based Inventory

- How do you actually complete the inventory? Would be helpful to understand what actually goes into it.
- Changing personal behavior – Little things are easier to change but are not as motivating in the big picture. It's hard to get a good sense of what can change outside of transportation when trying to change personal choices.
- For emissions reduction, recycling something is not as good as not buying it in the first place.
- Data for the consumption based inventory should be as local as possible.
 - Using income doesn't seem like a good way to tell what people consume. Different cultural habits might matter more.
- Need to clearly state the goal of the inventory: Inform policy and personal behavior change? Doing an inventory is great, but what comes of it?
- Add in what the City is doing to lead on waste reduction and how else local government can lead.
- Make connection between consumption based inventory and how that can connect to policy changes.
- Use inventory to share what residents can do, not what they shouldn't do. Guilt feeling is counter productive
- Find data on some of the things that are most overconsumed unnecessarily – and create easy communication on how to reduce that?
 - A lot of impact is pushed by businesses (plastic straws, packaging, bags)
 - Symbolism versus hard change. Straws are visual but percentage of what gets thrown away is really small. But is banning it making people think about waste?

Food waste

- Is local anaerobic digester feasible in Somerville given our density? It would still be useful if sited in greater Boston Area. Anaerobic digestion is regional solution.

- Need for public education about anaerobic digestion if city pursues this option.
- Anything we can learn from Boston's Zero Waste Plan? Food waste is a big piece of it.
- Don't call it compost if going to anaerobic digestion. No objections to anaerobic digestions—just different process and outcome than composting.
 - Environmentalists are bothered by co-digestion because end product can't be used as widely.
 - Education and how you convey the message are key.

Recycling

- China's recycling policy, increasing prices, and changing markets are making people nervous about the future of recycling.
 - How does promoting expanding recycling work with global recycling situation?
 - DEP is trying to encourage creation of recycling businesses.
- Recycling at large events: provide trash and recycling. City events need someone volunteering to help direct people to recycle.
 - Arlington is mandating that all vendors use compostable cutlery for city events.
 - Get organics collection at farmers market?

Targets and Metrics

- Don't use the targets from the carbon neutral pathways study. Rates aren't achievable given local situation.
- Can we tie metrics to consumption inventory?
- Setting an overall waste reduction goal would be helpful. Should focus on reducing all waste—not just increasing recycling (or compost). Ideally metrics should look at waste comprehensively (trash, recycling, food waste) and integrate consumption reduction.
 - Measure textile recycling too.

Visuals for plan

- Visuals showing how much people consume. Collect trash for one week and see how much you generate each week. Visual comparisons are effective (e.g. Pictures of what a family eats every week across the world).
- Visualize the lifecycle of a product. Where do things come from? What could you have saved if you bought locally?
- Lifecycle visual: where do our products come from and go when we throw them in trash/recycling?
- Heat map of Somerville showing how much each trash route consumes.
 - Neighborhood competitions to reduce waste